

## Commencements

# School Shootings Echo in Speeches

By DAVID W. CHEN

YONKERS, May 21 — The school massacre in Littleton, Colo., last month has emerged as one of the more poignant reference points this commencement season.

In her address today celebrating diversity, Joanne M. Braxton, a professor of American studies at the College of William and Mary, told Sarah Lawrence graduates that the atmosphere of ostracism that the two gunmen had felt was something very foreign to this Westchester County campus.

"Littleton, Colo., would never happen here, because it's safe to be different," said Dr. Braxton, who graduated from Sarah Lawrence in 1972. "Maintain that difference. Keep all the passionate discussion when you leave here."

Numerous speakers are weaving recent shooting incidents at American high schools into their commencement talks, from Attorney General Janet Reno at Wilkes University to Bill Bradley, the Democratic Presidential candidate, who spoke of "the pressure on our families and our children" at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In her speech today, Dr. Braxton used Littleton as a metaphor for the dangers of conformity and intolerance. "The violence in Littleton, Colo., is symptomatic of larger disorders in our society," said Dr. Braxton, who has written extensively about the trans-Atlantic slave trade and is co-editor of "Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afro-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance."

"The embrace of diversity must



Don Hogan Charles/The New York Times

The actor Patrick Stewart said it was the job of artists to give people experiences they can never forget.

form in order to make homes and families safe," she said. "We must communicate, not isolate. If we must be intolerant of something, let us be intolerant of intolerance itself."

Some 330 undergraduate and graduate students received degrees today at Sarah Lawrence's 70th commencement exercises.

### Juilliard School

When introducing Patrick Stewart at Juilliard's 94th commencement exercises yesterday, Joseph W. Polisi, the school's president, gave

details about Mr. Stewart's distinguished career as a Shakespearean actor. But he could not resist quoting the famous lines of Capt. Jean-Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise, Mr. Stewart's best-known role.

"Make it so," Mr. Polisi said to the cheering audience at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center. "I wish I could say that."

In his remarks to the graduating class of 220 actors, musicians and dancers, Mr. Stewart said: "Audiences want to be moved, excited, terrified, amused, shocked, changed. That is our job as artists — to give people an experience they will never forget."

Among the recipients of honorary degrees was the choreographer Bill T. Jones, who burst into an impromptu dance step after receiving his Doctor of Fine Arts degree, inspiring the other honorees — Peter S. Paine, the philanthropist, and Harvey Lichtenstein, outgoing president of the Brooklyn Academy of Music — to do the same as they returned to their seats.

Beverly Sills, the president of Lincoln Center, who also got an honorary degree, refrained because of a broken toe.

Under a cloudless sky, at a reception after the ceremonies on the theater balcony, Mr. Stewart stood for photographs with graduates and their families. As the crowd thickened around the actor, Mr. Polisi whispered to him, "I really do wish I could say, 'Make it so' the way you do, you know." Mr. Stewart answered, "I wanted to say it in my speech, but I thought you did it so well."

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